

APRIL, 1948

H O B B I E S

SHELLS
(See Natural
History Department)





NUMISMATIC THOUGHTS

By FRANK C. ROSS

The "Badger" Commemorative, 1836-1936

Read your coins. You should not just collect commemorative coins, you should also numismatise them; you should not look upon a commemorative as just another coin in your collection, but as another book in your library. There is a wonderful and instructive story behind each of them. Take the Wisconsin Centennial with the date 1836, and with a mining symbol on obverse and a badger on reverse; you immediately conclude that 1836 is the date of statehood, that the mining symbol is a general term, and that the badger is there because of the number of the burrowers in the state, and let it go at that. The 1836 is the year Wisconsin achieved territory-ship, not statehood. (It became a state in 1848). The ore shown under the miner's pick is pig lead. The badger is a burrowing animal that bores deep holes in the earth for its home. In this instance the arm and pick, and the badger, are not entirely separate entities; they are closely allied, sort of a team. The principal chapter in the story of the Wisconsin Centennial Coin is the one titled *Why Is Wisconsin Called The Badger State?*

An AP news item, Milwaukee, January 6th:—The sixth graders at the 18th Street school exhibited proudly today a letter acknowledging they found an error in the junior Encyclopedia Britannica. Their teacher, W. B. Wiebeck, explained they'd read in the encyclopedia that Wisconsin was nick-named the Badger state because it had so many badgers. The pupils learned, however, Wiebeck said, that the nick-name derived from the manner in which lead miners of Southwestern Wisconsin used to burrow into the sides of hills.

Excerpts (much condensed) from a letter written in 1879 by Moses M. Strong, a notable Wisconsin pioneer:—Your letter of 5th inst. requesting me to inform you what I know of the term "Badger" as applied to Wisconsin and its inhabitants is received. Whatever I know about it is traditional and may not be entirely correct. The lead mines of Wisconsin (Southwestern) were inhabited for about ten years previous to this time (1835) by a class of adventur-

ers, many of them itinerant. The homes burrowed by these miners in the side of hills were termed "badger holes." The term "Badger"—according to tradition—was first applied to the occupants of these temporary subterranean residences in derision—(as the term "Sucker" was applied to the migratory inhabitants of southern Illinois)—and afterwards to all the inhabitants of the lead-mine region, and by a not unnatural adaptation, has been applied to the people of Wisconsin and to the state itself.

(Thanks to the Wisconsin State Historical Society for its help)

oOo

Back Porch Gossip

President Truman's contemplated back porch addition to the White House it is feared will make numismatic upsets. That back porch may be just an incidental in carpentry, but it is a head-ache to the Treasury Department, and an important event in numismatics. Duke Shoop, Kansas City Star's Washington correspondent, says:—President Truman's insistence on having a "back porch" erected on the White House may play havoc with the currency of the United States. It might well cause the Treasury Department to re-design the country's \$20 bills. The \$20 bills contain the picture of the south portico of the White House, with its stately pillars unobstructed. Now that Mr. Truman has ordered the porch built half way up the pillars, the \$20 bills will be pictorially incorrect. The Treasury has been asked for a ruling as to whether the next issue of \$20 bills will conform to the architectural change in the mansion. The engraving of the south portico on the \$20 bills is very clearly and finely done. One would not have to be an expert to detect the discrepancy if the balcony is included in the next issue of the \$20 bank notes. The idea of Mr. Truman's whim for a back porch is one of the current jokes around Washington, but it is no joking matter with the Treasury department if it has to re-design its currency.

oOo

Twenty Years Ago the Hawaiian Sesquicentennial commemorative half dollar was issued to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Hawaiian Islands by Captain James Cook

in 1778. As Hawaii will very likely soon become the 49th state of the union, this half-dollar is of special interest. Capt. Cook is shown on one side of coin and a native chief on the other. Capt. Cook was slain by the natives, and therein hangs a tale. Blake Clark, author of Hawaii, the 49th State, in an article in the Readers Digest says:—When Queen Liliuokalani (Hawaii) visited Queen Victoria she said to the English Ruler, "I, too, have English blood in my veins—my ancestors ate Captain Cook."

oOo

England Sees Green. They are copy-cattin' our greenbacks. An English News item says "Britain is going to issue greenbacks. Large prewar stocks of unused green one pound notes will be issued as "new money" through the banks instead of the blue and pinkish brown bills now in circulation. The blues were issued in place of the greens in 1940 when it was first feared the Germans might overrun the country with bad money. They have a metal thread running through them to foil counterfeiters.

oOo

Opportunity Knocks. The scheme by a member of Congress to have our paper bills of different colors may have an opportunity to see the plan adopted. Another congressman wants new bills issued to replace the present ones to smoke out foreign hoarders of American dollars. If new money is issued, then, if ever, would be the time to rainbow it with colors. This would add zest to the collecting of paper money.

oOo

Confetti. The millions and millions and millions of dollars of worthless Old World paper money printed during and after the War should have a distinguishing name. Its present name of "War Money" is too general, as the term "money" in this instance is more technical than factual. Why not dub it "Confetti."

—o—

The Robot Cashier. If the present rate continues the familiar expression "money passes from hand to hand" will have to be changed to "from hand to machine". Whether the wear-and-tear to coins is worse with the slot-machine than with over-the-counter is yet to be determined. It is estimated that more than one billion dollars will be spent during 1948 via the slot-machine route. It seems that almost anything from Shoe-shines to coffee with or without cream and sugar may now be procured through these robot merchants.

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1941	2.50	2.75	3.00	7.50	1947 Dime	.15	.15	.15	.45
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RECOLLECTIONS OF AN OLD COLLECTOR

By THOMAS L. ELDER

ANNALS OF THE OLDEST CATALOGUER

David Proskey a veteran numismatist and authority on antiques in general, had his shop in an upstairs room near the corner of Broadway and 14th Street, where I found him in the year 1900-1.

I was working then in the General Passenger Agent's office of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad at Broadway and Howard streets. I lived on West 8th Street near Fifth Avenue. I had brought some of my Indian arrowheads along with me, having mounted them on a cardboard. These comprised some three or four hundred, and I toted them to Mr. Proskey's store to sell. His offer was modest, one cent per arrow, but I needed the room so I sold them to him.

He had a quite a stock of coins, paper money and antiques in general in that room. Soon after he was robbed by "George the Ferret," a professional thief, well-known. This thief, through the cleverness of my store girls before whom he later appeared, was caught by the police in my office on 23rd street and sentenced to four years in jail. He, "the Ferret" acknowledged, my girls had

been clever in having him apprehended. When the police suddenly appeared at my store, where he was being cajoled by my clerks, he commenced to shed, money, coins, curios and what not. They tell from his person in steady stream remarkable to behold. Later Mr. Proskey removed his store to a location on, I believe it was 39th street in the basement side-walk level, of an old residence, where he remained several years. He was later robbed there and lost some coins and paper money. Mr. Proskey was a most interesting character, tall, straight and wore a heavy beard. He was possibly the best posted man on coins and antiques in general in the East and had obtained in his time some of the best of coins and paper money. He was furthermore an authority on postage stamps; a most interesting man to talk with.

I remember when he secured a fine collection of original Fugio cents, most of which were bright red. He had so many that he sold them for the cheap price of a dollar per coin. These are the kind present dealers ask \$5 each for. There are no large known lots remaining of this most interesting coin. Mr. Proskey also possessed some sheets of the Rhode Island Continental notes of 1780 and 1786.

Proskey was not considered a cheap-priced dealer as a rule, but when he had accumulated a stock of one kind of coin or note he usually sold for a moderate price. He charged me \$3 a sheet for these Rhode Island notes, a reasonable price. He was a great authority on the rarity of coins, and also very fond of the political tokens and medals of 60 or 75 years ago and I sold for him his great McCoy collection in 1918, the largest collection ever offered for sale at least in recent years.

Mr. Proskey and I had some misunderstandings, but after he moved to 6th Avenue we became good friends and got along very well thereafter. He attended my dinners and was later an active member of the New York Numismatic Club, which came into existence in 1907. Mr. Proskey gave evidence that the elder Frossard was not popular with him, though I never learned the reasons why. From 39th Street Mr. Proskey moved his store to Sixth Avenue up about 51st Street where he had large quarters and his stock presented a most interesting appearance. He did not live long after he later moved out to his home in New Jersey near Paterson where he had a special building built to hold his treasures and curios. Whether these were subsequently sold or not I do not know. His son has, I believe, directed the disposal of his estate, which must have been important. I think Mr. Proskey was about 72 years of age at his death, and he

surely was one of the most important collectors and dealers in our midst and one of the best posted.

Bauman L. Belden was at this time secretary of the Numismatic Society in New York and active and interested in coins and medals. He wrote a work on the Indian medals, published by the Society. Another man of interest was William Poillon, Sr. He had, in old days, been curator of the Society's collections, and collected Masonic tokens and medals. I disposed of his remaining holdings at his death in 1916. He was a very friendly and interesting man, who died at about 75 years of age. He had been for many years a member of the Society if he was not one of its earliest members. It had been founded in 1858.

About this time came along Fred C. Boyd greatly interested in coin and in club and society affairs. He is well versed in coins and possesses one of the finest collections in our midst. He is a good example to prove that collecting helps to keep people young. He first made his appearance in my sales room on East 23rd, about the year 1907 — a very popular man. — One of the characters of that day was a Swedish-American collector named Julius De Lagerberg, who had all the pompous manner of an old world diplomat and scholar. Medals was his forte. He had many of them and nobody was more interested in them than he. He was a great talker and entertained us often when he called to discuss coin and medal affairs and collectors in general. He had had a brother of prominence in coins in Sweden. Mr. De Lagerberg lived at Passaic, N. J. He has been dead almost 20 years. He was a friendly and likeable man.

Frank Higgins was active, and a frequent caller. He was very fond of Chinese food and he and I often went to Chinatown with Howland Wood to indulge in the mysteries of large plates of chop-suey and chicken chow mein. Wood was another man with Oriental tastes though he did not get to New York until some years later. One of the A. N. A. conventions at New York in the early 1900's included a banquet in Chinatown arranged by Higgins, where we enjoyed the tid-bit of sharks fins and listened to the dulcet strains and whinnings of a real Chinese orchestra. There Higgins delivered a lecture on his book "The Chinese Numismatic Riddle," with slides, which seemed appropriate to the surroundings. The writer had been going to Chinatown since 1899, when he knew a missionary and a teacher, and even attended Chinese weddings about which rooms hang coin swords made of Chinese coins, oriental daggers and other objects of oriental color. At that time there were even a few old Chinese coins to be had in the shops.

Chinatown was a favorite haunt for many coin collectors including men like A. R. Frey. I understand Higgins was the very first man to suggest to Chinatown that it can some of its delicacies and chop-suey, which has become so popular today.



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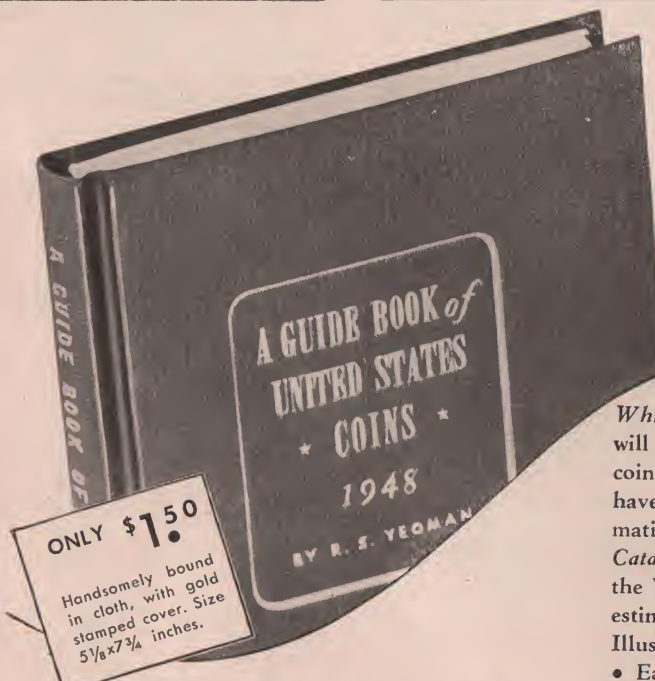
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Collectiana

Referring to numismatists, Mr. Joseph Schmand of the H. A. N. A. of Kansas City, poetizes thusly:—
They call us "nuts"; but why, no-body knows.
There are hazel nuts, and walnuts, and nuts called "nigger toes,"
But I don't think it's right, by gosh, to call US one of those.

oOo

Tribute Money. The Bible has no monopoly on the story of tribute money. Early Madagascar rulers collected their tribute money under the guise of loyalty tests. But a tax is a tax no matter how "sweetened" it is. Mr. A. Quinell (New Zealand), speaking of early Madagascar, says that part of the Coronation Ceremony consisted of the tribes, State officials, foreigners, missionaries, etc., presenting a Spanish dollar as their "Hazine" (present) token of loyalty and submission to the new sovereign; this also applied too, when a stranger was granted an audience with the monarch.

oOo

Publicize With Coins. New Orleans claims a famous FIRST. The New Orleans Public Service Incorporated, in its pamphlet RIDERS' DIGEST, says:—The term "two-bits," meaning a quarter of a dollar, originated in New Orleans when Mexican silver dollars were accepted in trade. By cutting the dollar into halves and quarters one made change. When a quarter of a dollar was cut in half it created two "bits" — each bit being worth twelve and half cents.

oOo

Proof Coins are merely the adornments of coinage, the plumage that adorns the servicable hats of Miss Numisma.

oOo

The party had something on the ball when he said "A majority working is better than a working majority." Coin clubs please note.

oOo

A numismatist who lets his tongue wag his brain instead of vice versa is known as a numisma-static-ist.

—O—

A Pre-Dated Medal. Probably the most unique medal ever struck. Johannes C. Anderson in the Bulletin of the New Zealand Numismatic Society said:—"I was particularly struck by the paragraph relating to the medal for the battle of Palapaquet, on which the date is given as Aug. 31, 1709, but in histories as Sept. 11, 1709, the apparent discrepancy being due to the dropping of 11 days in the calendar of 1752. Numismatists who possess that medal will have a unique memorial of this dropping of 11 days in the calendar.

Foreign Coin, banknote and large illustrated coin list FREE to approval service applicants for 2c postage. **BARGAINS!**

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A Kingly Boast. The Hawaii dollar of 1883 bears the head of King Kalakaua. Mr. Bullowa reminds us that this is possibly the only U. S. territory that can boast a native royal dynasty. When collectors become acquainted with the uniqueness of this coin the present price of about \$3 will take a jump. It will be a "Royal" favorite in any collection of uniquenesses.

oOo

Gold Increases in the Philippines

Whether the Philippine mint is being operated at this time I am uncertain, but there is activity in the gold mines of the Islands. The Benquet-Balatoe mine is going at full blast. The gold mined there is being sold at above the regular \$35 an ounce. Some of the gold is being sold at Manila for more than \$45 an ounce.

The Chinese market for gold is active at \$60 per ounce. Some of the Canadian dealers in gold are offering a \$7 bonus at \$42 per ounce and seem to be quite active.

From the above accounts it would seem that gold is commencing to react to the present inflationary trend. However, gold at \$35 per ounce, the fixed price, seems altogether too low in view of present price trends in commodities.

WANTED TO BUY

WANTED FOR CASH. Michigan obsolete bank notes and scrip.—Harold L. Bowen, 818 Lawrence Ave., Detroit 2, Michigan. mh124601

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WANTED: COINS for my collection. Write me before selling. —Charles A. McLean, 24 Grove St., Asheville, N. C. je6405

CONFEDERATE MONEY, coins. Buy or sell.—Karl Stecher, Box 338, Washington 4, D. C. je6463

U. S. COINS: Buy, sell, exchange.—George Aiken, 56 Mattie Street, Auburn, New York. je12617

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| 1803 fine \$2.50; good \$1. | 1845-46-47-48-49-50-51-52-53-54 gd., ea. 30c |
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